

ROCKY HILL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

SECTION I

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment (See definitions below)

Rocky Hill Congregational Church is committed to creating and maintaining a worship and work community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Specifically, all persons associated with this Church should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention of the church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior which is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

Ministerial Conduct (See definitions below)

All persons engaged in the ministry of Rocky Hill Congregational Church (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of parishioner(s) or other individual(s) by anyone engaged in the ministry of this Church is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Because ministers (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and ministers) often deal with individuals who are emotionally and psychologically fragile or personally vulnerable, it is imperative that those engaged in the ministry of this church maintain their own psychological, emotional, and spiritual health and that they have adequate preparation and education for helping those individuals they seek to serve in ministry. It is the policy of this Church to encourage its leaders, ministers, employees, and volunteers to nurture safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

Youth Protection Policy

Rocky Hill Congregational Church is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all youth activities.

Definitions

Minister: a person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. Minister includes elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, and volunteers, as well as authorized ministers.

Authorized minister: a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ.

Ministerial relationship: the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.

Sexual exploitation: sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.

Sexual harassment: repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the church. For example, it is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

SECTION II

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The congregation and clergy/pastors of Rocky Hill Congregational Church aspire to be a Christ centered fellowship where all can seek a closer relationship with God in a trusting, nurturing place. As part of this mission, one of the goals is to provide a safe, nurturing environment for all who participate in our programs and use our facilities. We want our church home to be a haven free of exploitation, intimidation abuse misconduct and harassment of any form. To help reach these goals, we have adopted a policy, which goes far to reduce the possibility of these forms of abuse from occurring within our church home or at any of its activities wherever held. The implementation of prudent policies will help safeguard our church family members. While policies cannot anticipate and prevent all misfortune, they can state the goal and provide guidance to achieve it. In these pages is expressed our keen dedication and obligation to protecting our church family, while maintaining the trusting atmosphere in Rocky Hill Congregational Church for the entire congregation: adults, youth and children alike. The policy will give us a direction to follow with regard to sexual misconduct/harassment/abuse incidents and how to respond to these in a firm and faithful manner.

SECTION III

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Senior Pastor and the Moderator of the church will make this policy available for the education of the church staff, volunteers and church members in recognizing and reporting sexual abuse, misconduct and/or harassment incidents. Appropriate updated "training programs" will provide an opportunity for further education and training in our church.

The Senior Pastor and the Moderator of the Church will ensure that all the present and future Church boards and committees receive, read and acknowledge receipt of this policy. Form A will be used; signing and dating the form.

AMENDMENT

This policy statement, and the guidelines in all their parts, will be subject to review and/or modification by the congregation of Rocky Hill Congregational Church, UCC, at a meeting called for such purpose and held in accordance with the Special Meetings section of the Bylaws of the church. A majority vote will prevail.

SECTION IV

MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS/CONFIDENTIALITY

All records and materials pertinent to this policy shall be kept for a legally appropriate time in a secure place. The Senior Pastor and Advocacy Panel will determine the location and the security measures, which insure confidentiality and safety of the records.

SECTION V

PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING COMPLAINTS/ALLEGATIONS OF

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT/HARASSMENT/ABUSE

ADVOCACY PANEL

An Advocacy Panel shall be established. The panel shall be composed of four members (4) of the church. The congregation shall elect one male and one female panel member. The Moderator of the Church shall appoint a female member and a male member, one serving as an alternate. The alternate may be called upon by the complainant, the accused or the panel. Members shall serve one five year term and may not be reelected or reappointed. This panel shall be a fully constituted committee of the church. Its members may serve elsewhere in the church as they are asked or so choose. Panel members will elect their own chairperson and their names shall be noted in documents relating to this policy.

- A. Changes in panel membership shall be announced promptly to the congregation in its Church publications. Vacancies on the panel shall be filled in this manner: The stipulated gender balance shall be maintained. The Nominating Committee shall replace the elected panel members and the Church Moderator shall replace those appointed upon the approval of the council.
- B. It will be the duty of this Panel to familiarize itself with this policy, as well as all other church procedures as they pertain to sexual misconduct/harassment/abuse and our goal to be a safe and nurturing place for all.
- C. The panel shall take reasonable measures to ensure the confidentiality of all panel proceedings.

SECTION VI

REPORTING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT/HARASSMENT/ABUSE

- A. All incidents/allegations of sexual misconduct/harassment/abuse are to be reported to the Senior Pastor (Professional Staff), the Senior Deacon, Christian Education Board, the Church School Director, or the Church Moderator (see Form B). The Advocacy Panel will also be notified by any of the above to begin the resolution process.
- B. Several options may be taken in addressing incidents of alleged sexual misconduct/harassment/abuse.
 1. The complainant may meet with the Pastor and with others listed in Section VI, paragraph A, in an effort to informally resolve the allegation.
 2. If an informal resolution of the complaint(s) does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the complainant(s) or pastor may request that the Advocacy Panel institute formal proceedings which shall include the following steps:
 - a. In determining whether the alleged conduct constitutes sexual misconduct/harassment/abuse, consideration shall be given to the record of the alleged incident(s) (Form B) as a whole, and to the totality of the circumstances, including the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.
 - b. The Advocacy Panel shall gather statements and other information from the individuals involved in the alleged sexual misconduct/harassment/abuse, and from others who may have pertinent information.
 - c. The Advocacy Panel shall make decisions and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. These may include:
 - 1). Finding that sexual abuse, misconduct and/or harassment HAS occurred, and notifying the appropriate body of the church (Diaconate, Church Council, Christian Education Board, etc., or members of the Pastoral Staff) that action **MUST** be taken. Such action may include one or more of the following:
 - a). Formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior;
 - b). Recommending or requiring a program of growth that may include education and/or counseling;
 - c). Probation, with the terms of the probation clearly defined;
 - d). Dismissal from employment, from a volunteer or leadership position, and, in extreme cases, affiliation with, or membership in, the Church.
 - 2). Finding that NO sexual misconduct/harassment/abuse has occurred.
 - 3). If allegations of possible child abuse are included in the complaint(s), the Advocacy Panel, with Pastoral participation (if prudent) and with legal advice from the church's attorney, shall notify appropriate secular authorities; and the Rocky Hill Congregational Church, shall cooperate fully in any investigation. This policy statement and guidelines shall continue to be followed until a determination is made regarding the continuance of the individuals participating, in any capacity, in this Church.

- C. If the accused employee or volunteer is an authorized minister (i.e., holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ) the Advocacy Panel, Diaconate and Moderator shall, with Legal Counsel, inform the wider United Church of Christ (i.e., Conference Minister, Association Committee on the Ministry, The Regional Minister) of the allegation. Rocky Hill Congregational Church will cooperate fully in any procedures of the United Church of Christ related to the person's ministerial authorization while retaining the right and responsibility to employ or designate leadership within the Rocky Hill Congregational Church as it determines best.
- D. A written record shall be kept, and summary report made, of the Advocacy Panel's proceedings in all sexual misconduct/harassment/abuse incidents.
- E. Any person bringing a sexual misconduct/harassment/abuse allegation, or assisting in bringing or investigating such a complaint, will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.
- F. If the complainant(s) or the accused person(s) is not satisfied with the disposition of their allegation/complaint by the appropriate church staff or body, to whom they were referred, then he or she has the right to appeal to the Advocacy Panel for redress. Further appeal after the Panel, if substantive reasons exist, shall be to the Moderator, who shall take the matter to the Church Council for a final hearing and resolution.

SECTION VII

GENERAL GUIDELINES

A. PAID STAFF/VOLUNTEER STAFF

1. All paid staff, whether or not they work on a regular basis with children, shall be required to fill out an application (Form A). Exceptions to that would be one-time soloists, musicians, and other one-time resource persons.
2. A reference check may be conducted. Written notes from those conversations shall be kept on file. Former employers may be contacted. When a reference refuses to answer a question, that shall also be noted and filed.

B. KEYS

1. The Board of Trustees will be responsible for issuing all keys.
2. All keys given to people for the purpose of entering Rocky Hill Congregational Church shall be only to the North or East door of the church.
3. Locks on these doors shall be changed periodically.
4. Keys will be stamped DO NOT DUPLICATE, and will also be otherwise marked to facilitate tracking.
5. Keys will be issued ONLY to people whose current duties require that they have such.
6. No "EMERGENCY KEY" WILL BE LEFT OUTSIDE THE BUILDING FOR GENERAL USE with the exception of a certified Fire Department "lock box and key".
7. A careful list of key holders will be made and maintained by the Trustees and/or their church agent (i.e., church office, etc.)
8. People issued a key will sign a form (Form C) which states that:
 - a. they will not make duplicates of keys.
 - b. they will not "loan" the key.
 - c. the church key shall be returned to the Trustees when the need to have such no longer exists. Key holders shall not mind being reminded by the trustees to return their key.

C. INSURANCE POLICY

1. The Board of Trustees shall review the church liability policy annually to determine if the church is adequately and appropriately covered for all acts of sexual misconduct/harassment/abuse which occur on or beyond church property during church activities.

D. PASTORAL CARE

1. While providing pastoral care, the pastor shall be careful to not allow a counseling relationship to become extended beyond a reasonable time limit. Appropriate referral must be suggested, and the person counseled helped to make this adjustment.
2. When practical, it is best if a family member, friend or a member of the church or Pastor's family be present during pastoral visitations.

E. TEACHING POLICIES

Teaching policies will be established by the Board of Christian Education and the current policies shall be attached to this document.

F. GUIDELINES FOR THE INTERACTION OF YOUTH AND ADULTS

1. Programs involving "one on one".

Adults involved in "one on one" programs with youths shall keep a record of the meetings using the log in Form D.

2. Reporting Responsibilities

Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker and a youth shall be promptly reported to any of those parties/sources listed in Section VI. paragraph A. An incident report (Form B) shall be filed promptly with the Senior Pastor (if prudent) and the Advocacy Panel.

3. Overnight Rule

Any and all adult chaperons supervising overnight stays of Church youth shall have been cleared to do so by the Pastor, Associate Pastor, or other designated official. Our goal is that two adult males (but at least one) will dorm with boys and two adult females (but at least one) with girls during all overnight trips or activities. A signed parental permission slip, provided by the church, is required. This slip shall also include the names of participating advisors.

4. Youth Members of Boards and Committees

No youth member of a church board, committee, sub-committee, or task force, shall be in attendance at a meeting unless two or more adult members, or the youth's parent or guardian is present.

5. Group Activities

a. Physical contact such as wrestling, horseplay, surfing, sardines or other high body contact games are not appropriate recreational activity. No adult leader, staff or volunteer, should initiate, participate in or encourage physical or intimate contact with youth. Setting boundaries is the responsibility of the adults.

b. In any activity involving youth or children, the participants are expected to remain with the group for the duration of the program/event. No pairing or other separation from the group to other parts of the building or grounds is permitted except with permission of group leaders, and with appropriate supervision.

6. Leaving and Locking

The last three people, including the staff person locking the door, will leave the church together. Youths need to notify the adult leaders when they leave. We avoid situations where one adult and one youth or child are left at the church door waiting to be picked up by parents at the end of an evening activity. Parents are encouraged to respect concluding times.

7. Drugs, Tobacco and Alcohol

The possession, offering, sharing or use of any drugs, tobacco or alcoholic products on or in church facilities is NOT permitted.

8. Transportation

It is our goal that transportation of children and youth between a church activity and home by people other than family members must be provided by two or more adults. Transportation for field trips, activities and events to/from the church is by groups when practical.

SECTION VIII

REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT/HARASSMENT/ABUSE

- A. All allegations will be taken seriously.
- B. Response to allegations will be handled with due respect for everyone's privacy and confidentiality.
- C. Care and safety of complainants (and family) are our first priority. We will extend whatever pastoral resources are needed and make needed notifications as appropriate.
- D. All activity involved in handling the incident will be documented (see Form B). The date, time, persons involved as well as the content of what was done will be noted. All documentation will be held confidential.
 - 1. It will be the responsibility of only the parties/sources listed in SECTION VI paragraph A, to report incidents involving children to the Department of Children and Families, the UCC Insurance Advisory Board and the church's attorney.
 - 2. Should it become necessary, all cooperation will be given to civil authorities under guidance of the church's attorney. The church's attorney must be present while any investigative questions from the police or social service agencies are being answered by anyone associated with Rocky Hill Congregational Church.
- E. When questionable or inappropriate behavior related to possible sexual misconduct/harassment/abuse between adults is observed, it should be reported to the senior pastor and/or the Advocacy Panel. The incident will be documented by the pastoral staff or the Advocacy Panel who will discuss it and select a response. Responses might include but are not limited to:
 - 1. Documentation and close supervision of the person named, being certain that all involved persons understand the need for supervision;
 - 2. Discussion with the person named to help him or her to understand and respect appropriate limits of behavior;
 - 3. Discussion with the person whose behavior is in question and removal from the position; counseling may or may not be recommended;
 - 4. Evaluation of the incident, including conversations with the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator and, their respective advocates, and an agreement that counseling is indicated for either or both persons. The person(s) must provide proof that counseling has been initiated (e.g., a provided receipt or letter). If the alleged perpetrator admits guilt and agrees to counseling, and if this is satisfactory with the alleged victim and the clergy and/or advocacy panel, and if the nature of the incident does not require legal intervention, a formal report to authorities may not be necessary.
 - 5. A formal report may be filed in which case the professional (UCC Conference Minister or police) will take responsibility for evaluation and investigation. The alleged perpetrator will be removed without prejudice from his or her position pending completion of the investigation. In such a case, the UCC Insurance Advisory Board and the church's attorney will be notified.
- F. We will treat the accused with dignity and respect, and offer support. If the accused is a church worker, he or she should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is completed. If the accused is a paid employee, a decision will be made to maintain or suspend his or her income, as appropriate, until the allegations are cleared or

substantiated.

- G. We will be prepared to issue a public statement to inform the congregation and respond to press inquiries. This statement, through the pastor, moderator, Senior Deacon or chair of the Advocacy Panel, or the church's attorney, will communicate that the church regards these allegations seriously and offers responsible action, concern, and support for all involved. No details of the accusation will be released. We will not deny that an incident has occurred; nor will we assign blame; or minimize the situation (e.g., "it wasn't that serious".) In any case, no statement will be issued until it has been approved by the church's attorney.

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discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct, physical abuse, child abuse, or financial misconduct.

True Not True

If not true, give a short explanation. (Please indicate the date of termination, name address and telephone number of employer and nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination).

D. Do you have a valid driver's license? Yes No

If yes, from which state? _____
Driver's license number _____

With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.

True Not True

E. Is there any fact of circumstances involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?

Yes No, if yes, please provide a brief explanation

The covenants between persons seeking employment in the church require honesty, integrity and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth on this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to reasonably amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between employees and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize the Rocky Hill Congregational Church and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement and other public agencies to respond to inquiries regarding my background and character. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments and statements made in good faith and without malice.

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AFFIRMATION

Rocky Hill Congregational Church's hiring process involves the distribution of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure and supervise the position I am seeking to fill. To that end, I authorize Rocky Hill Congregational Church and its agents to circulate, distribute and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these stated purposes. I understand that RHCC will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

I have received a copy of the Rocky Hill Congregational Church, UCC, Safe Church Policy; I have read the policy and I intend to follow the policy.

Applicant's signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX

Rocky Hill Congregational Church, UCC
Safe Church Policy
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FORM B

ABUSE/MISCONDUCT/HARASSMENT INCIDENT REPORT
(Please complete both sides of this report)

Involved Person's Name:	_____		
Home Address:	_____		
	Street		
	_____	_____	_____
	City	State	Zip
Date of Birth:	_____	Gender: Male/Female	

Name of female parent/guardian (If above is under 18)	_____		
Home Address:	_____		
	Street		
	_____	_____	_____
	City	State	Zip
Daytime Phone: () _____	Evening Phone: () _____		

Name of male parent/guardian (If above is under 18)	_____		
Home Address:	_____		
	Street		
	_____	_____	_____
	City	State	Zip
Daytime Phone: () _____	Evening Phone: () _____		

Person Reporting Incident:	_____		
Home Address:	_____		
	Street		
	_____	_____	_____
	City	State	Zip
Daytime Phone: () _____	Evening Phone: () _____		

OFFICE USE ONLY	
Date Report Received: _____	Report Received By: _____
Comments: _____	_____

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1) What is the nature and extent of the sexual misconduct/harassment/abuse? Include specifics such as dates, time, location.

2) What are the circumstances under which the reporter became aware of the incident? (Include witnesses)

3) What action has been taken thus far?

4) Please give other information which you think might be helpful in establishing the cause of the incident and the person responsible for it. If known, please provide the name(s) of the alleged perpetrators(s).

Signature of Reporter: _____ Date: _____

Please complete this report within 24 hours of the incident and return it to the church office in a sealed envelope marked "PRIVATE/CONFIDENTIAL, CHAIRPERSON, ADVOCACY PANEL".

Note: The church may be required to report this incident to the appropriate state agencies.

APPENDIX

Rocky Hill Congregational Church, UCC
Safe Church Policy

FORM C

KEY FORM

In receiving a key to Rocky Hill Congregational Church, I realize the great trust this implies, and I agree to the following conditions:

- A. I will NOT make or cause to be made duplicates of the key.
- B. I will NOT loan this key to others.
- C. I will return this key when the need to have a key no longer exists. I will not mind being reminded by the Trustees to return the key.
- D. I will report a lost key immediately to the church office.
- E. A separate form will be filled out for each key received.
- F. I will not bring children in to the Church at unauthorized times.

Check here if you will using the key on a regular basis for a day at a time.

Key Identification # _____

Applicant for key _____

Group Affiliation _____

Address _____

Phone No. _____ Signature _____

Date _____ Church Representative _____

Signature _____

Date key returned _____

Church Representative _____

Signature _____

I understand that by receiving a key to the Church, I become an agent of the Church. This means that I will be held personally liable in all civil suits brought against the Church regardless of my involvement in these civil suits.

Initials _____

APPENDIX

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FORM D

ONE ON ONE MEETING LOG

Date	Start Time	End Time	Youth	Adult